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Introduction: World State Futures

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Key words

World state, global governance, global public sphere, international community, world/global

In his ISA Presidential Address, Thomas G. Weiss (2009: 253) wondered what happened ‘to the idea of world government, so central in the United States to public debate of the 1930s and 1940s, and why has it been replaced by ‘global governance’?’ He tied debates about world government to the history of 20th century world organizations, the League of Nations and the United Nations. Indeed, there were hopes after both the First and Second World War that a world state would be established in the immediate future. For instance, in 1914-17, H.G.Wells aroused attention in advocating a representative world congress as the basis of the League (Partington, 2003: 79-80; Wagar, 2004: 160-1). In the aftermath of the Great War, in 1920, Wells expressed his deep disappointments at the real-world historical developments. ‘This League of Nations as it was embodied in the Covenant of April 28th 1919, was not a League of Peoples at all; it was, the world discovered, a league of ‘states, dominions or colonies’.’ It was, moreover, a league of victorious war-allies. (Wells, 1931: 1118-9).

In the 1940s, it was the emerging Cold War that spelled an end to the then widespread hopes for a world state (because the Russian Revolution would not have occurred without the First World War, the Cold War was intertwined with the earlier layer of 1914-18 and its aftermath). Hans Morgenthau's classic textbook *Politics Among Nations* was written and rewritten during the Cold War. The book was a candid argument for a world state, but it was also based on the premise that 'the world state is unattainable [...] in the world in our time' (1961: 539).

Morgenthau died in 1980 and the Cold War ended a decade later. Since the early 1990s, more people may have been discussing the ideas of global security, democracy and justice than that of the world state *per se*, yet all these interconnected ideas have a common background in cosmopolitan philosophies that have existed for centuries in their modern form, and much longer in other forms (Bartelson, 2009; Linklater, 1982; and Patomäki, 2010, trace their origins back to ancient scientific and philosophical conceptions).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) remains the best-known symbol for modern universalist cosmopolitanism. In his *Perpetual Peace* and other political essays, Kant (1983) opened a floor where later discussions could find their path to the future within an array of terms such as federalism, confederalism, armistices, truces, leagues of peace, contracts of peoples, peace contracts, allied states, law of peoples, and many somewhat intranslatable ideas as the difference between a 'Völkerbund' and a 'Völkerstaat', a 'league of nations' or a 'state of peoples'. Kant was not arguing for a world state, however. He warned about the Dantean idea of a 'universal monarchy', but argued for an 'always more extended union' – a phrase repeated in the double phrase of 'an ever closer union' and a guaranteed 'steady expansion' among the preambles of The Treaty of Rome in 1957 (for a discussion on Kant and European integration, see Harste, 2009).

During the past century, the majority of thoughts spent on the concept world state focus on the issue of whether the formation of a future world state is desirable or attainable. In one form or another the issues have tended to be, first and foremost, normative questions. For instance, would such a world state, particularly if compared to a federation of states (as suggested by Kant), degenerate into universal despotism (Zolo, 1997), or could it in some form be democratic (Held, 1995). In addition to these discussions, many contributions in the field of International Relations, particularly in the tradition of political realism, have argued that although a world state may in fact be desirable in order to overcome the problems emerging from the nature of states as self-interested, power-seeking entities, it is exactly because of existing real powers the latter that a world state will not emerge in the foreseeable future (see Aron, 1962; Morgenthau, 1961).

In contrast to these traditional (and ongoing) discussions, which in one respect or another are invariably about the (normative) desirability of a world state imagined largely in analogy to the modern territorial-cum-nation-state, two different strands of dealing with the question of a world state have emerged over recent years. They differ from the established discussions on the subject mentioned above in that they are less focussed on normative arguments about the subject. On the one hand are those contributions, mostly stemming from a sociological background, which argue that in one form or another a world or global state (or a form of 'world statehood') already exists, that various structures and elements of the world political system have consolidated into a form which represents some form of statehood. However this form is quite unlike the one to be found in modern territorial nation-states (see Shaw, 2000; Albert and Stichweh, 2007). On the other hand are those contributions which argue that although a world state may not yet exist, its emergence is inevitable. This inevitability is then derived either from a macro-historical argument about a permanent decline in the number of polities on the globe over the centuries and even millennia (see Carneiro, 2004), or from a

more philosophical argument in which only the world state can solve basic problems of security and recognition (see Wendt, 2003). To this may be added global-Keynesian and similar political economy arguments about the necessity of a global state formation.

The present special issue seeks to contribute to the newer discussion on the world state by proceeding mostly along the two non-traditional lines of thought on the world state, and by further posing questions about the viability or sustainability of a would-be world state. While on the one hand the underlying diagnosis is shared that a form of world statehood is in existence already, the diagnoses of ‘inevitability’ are usually guided more by the leitmotif of modern territorial nation-statehood expanded to a global scale, and thus miss the point of the former discussion. Yet we argue that quite a number of insights can be gained from both the inevitability and viability discussions as these highlight that future scenarios and thoughts about its further evolution mark a blind spot when thinking about *contemporary world statehood*, about something is already in existence and in the process of evolvement.

Contemporary world statehood

Structures and forms of global governance can arguably be seen to more and more exhibit characteristics of an, albeit rudimentary, world state as they rest on processes of *global constitutionalization*, the evolution of a *global governance and public sphere*, and the *semantics of an international community*. However, the emergence of world statehood cannot be seen as a process of the formation of a global homogenous political space, and even less as the emergence of a global unitary state. Quite to the contrary, the emergence of world statehood constitutively rests on the simultaneity of processes of constitutionalization and fragmentation in the global political and legal systems.

Talking about the evolution of world statehood at the beginning of the twenty-first century only makes sense if not read against the traditional concept of the modern state. This concept strictly ties together statehood as a form of organizing political space with the nation and/or the territorial state (and as such also forms the main point of reference for the majority of discussions on the 'world state' in political philosophy). And the concept of world statehood only makes sense if contrasted to 'Westphalian' model of territorially *exclusive* statehood constitutively embedded in the body of international law and underpinning what Ulrich Beck and others have identified as 'methodological nationalism' (see Beck and Sznajder, 2006; Chernilo, 2007).

The notion of an 'exclusive' statehood here primarily refers to the image of a unitary political space organized as a state, which precludes different overlapping forms of state authority to coexist within the same space. In contrast to this concept, the notion of 'inclusive' statehood means that different forms of political orders organized as a state structure within the same geographical space without necessarily being mediated through a final rule for dealing with norm collisions (i.e. the figure of sovereignty; see Shaw, 2000). We argue that in the end global governance can be conceptualized as the emergence of forms of inclusive statehood on a global level. However, and in marked contrasts to images of 'new medievalism' (see Bull, 1977) as a patchworks of cross-cutting loyalties and overlapping spheres of authority, this development also pertains to the emergence of a global level for making collective decisions, a level which however does not displace the relevant national settings. It is in such a context that questions about political legitimacy beyond the nation-state arise almost automatically. This is even more so if the emergence of global political structures is seen to exhibit elements of world statehood.

Today, the idea of an emerging world statehood particularly rests on the diagnosis of a consolidation of structures of global governance, understood as the condition of the possibility to supply capacities for collectively binding decision-making in a global context, as well as on the observation of the development of a semantics of globality which accompanies the formation of political structures. In the following, these elements of an emerging world statehood will be sketched briefly before in the following we can lay open the ensuing problems with its democratic legitimacy.

It seems to be barely disputed that in a globalized world it is not only nation-states which 'govern'. 'Governing beyond the nation-state' (Zürn, 1998) takes place in different international institutions and regulatory regimes which increasingly are underpinned by *legal* rules. While global governance thus partly takes place as 'governance without government' and partly as 'governance with government' and while a significant part of global governance research focuses on the changing boundaries between public and private regulatory agents in this context, 'the state' has to a large part disappeared from the discussion on global governance. Not unlike European integration research with the for some time quite prominent notion of the EU as an entity 'sui generis', this 'loss' of the state however entails severe disadvantages in that it prematurely gives up on one possibility to identify and designate the unity of the diversity of global regulatory arrangements. The emergence of governing functions on a global level and the process of international organization which increases the capacities for arriving at collectively binding decisions in international politics suggest that it is insufficient to merely perceive global governance as a more or less disorganized process of regime formation. It seems appropriate to talk about an *emergent* property of the political system of world society in this case, particularly as the structure of global governance give rise to their own specific symbolic systems which cannot be reduced to or mapped upon the properties of international politics as the interaction context of sovereign nation-states. Of

course, such an assessment alone does not necessitate approaching such an emergent property with the notion of the state. This is only suggested by the observation that this emergent property is accompanied by different forms of *law formation*. And this is regardless of the (theoretically interesting) question whether the contemporary evolution of world law can be understood to express a process of constitutionalization or whether it is rather characterized by the emergence of functionally specific global constitutions (in the plural). Decisive in the present context is that one ‘global constitution’ (Fischer-Lescano, 2005) based on human rights norms has emerged at the interstices of the political and the legal system of world society and that this global constitution defines minimum standards of legitimacy for global governance (see also the similar but also contrastive notion of new constitutionalism of disciplinary neoliberalism in Gill, 1998). Of course, such a global constitution cannot be characterized by an ‘act of full legitimation of *global governance* which could be traced back to a world sovereign’ (Fischer-Lescano, 2005: 30, own transl.), this global constitution is possibly only ‘legitimized partially and mediated through states’ (ibid.).

However, it is *particularly* this partial reliance of a global constitution on the existing nation-states which suggests using the notion of the state for describing the emergent, constitutionally legalized structures of global governance. One of the main advantages of using the notion of the state in this context is that if understood in terms of inclusive statehood it can be used to counter the quite contra-intuitive idea that governing beyond the nation state would take place in a space of political actors and organizations which not only lie beyond the purview of the nation-state, but beyond any form of statehood itself.

However, using the notion of the state in relation to global governance is not only suggested by the increasing coupling between developments within the political and the legal systems of world society. It is also suggested by the fact that the emergent property of the global political

system increasingly produces forms of self-description and self-observation of itself *as* a level of *world* politics. It is particularly the semantic figure of an ‘international community’ which in this context fulfils the function of a global public (cf. Jäger, 2004), as the formula through which the political system of world society describes itself. In doing so, it ascribes to this system the property of some kind of social order (and not, for example, the ‘anarchy’ of political realism).

One indication that the ‘international community’ is consolidated as the formula for the self-description of the political system of world society which contains elements of statehood can be found in tendencies in which this international community not only serves as a normative horizon for observing the actions of nations states, but is increasingly specified according to the conditions under which states can (see Saunders, 2006) or should (see Hahn, 2006) be excluded from this international community. These questions are closely connected with those regarding the (sources of) legitimacy of different kinds of actors like states, NGOs, or international direct administrations in the global political system (Clark, 2003; Collingwood, 2006; Zaum, 2006). It has been convincingly argued in relation to the global constitution mentioned above that in addition to traditional sovereignty rights the human rights regime has established itself as a second main source of legitimacy and in this sense as a *conditio sine qua non* for inclusion into international community (Bonacker, 2003).

The idea that some kind of world statehood can be seen to emerge needs to be safeguarded against potential conceptual overstretch. It would certainly lead to such an overstretch if it were interpreted to mean an *exclusive* form, displacing other kinds of statehood (in the sense that there can only be one state at one place at any one time). Thus, what is also explicitly not meant with the diagnosed form of an emerging world statehood is that what can be witnessed in and through such a form would be a dominant *structure* characterizing the political as well

as the legal systems of world society. What it seeks to signify is the simultaneity of various forms of differentiation within the function systems of world society as well as the variety of forms of couplings between the different function systems. Both the political as well as the legal system are no longer unequivocally characterized by a primacy of segmentary differentiation (into nation-states, national legal systems). However, it also seems implausible to characterize either of them through a primacy of stratificatory differentiation (see Zürn et al., 2007). Rather, what can be observed is a diversity of forms of differentiation and structure formation (see Buzan and Albert, 2010). And it is in this context in which the evolution of world statehood signifies *one* process of structure formation as an emergent property of the political system of world society.

World and globe, logics of statehood

It will be noted that the contributions to this special issue use the notions of ‘world’ and ‘global’ more or less interchangeably, and mostly do not come down with very strict definitions of ‘state’. Regarding the use of the ‘world’ and the ‘global’, this indeed is in keeping with the common practice regarding politics, where usually no substantial distinction is made between ‘world politics’ or ‘global politics’. Although barely reflected on thus far, this situation on the other does not pertain most notably to issues of ‘global governance’ or a ‘global civil society’ (references to ‘world governance’ or a ‘world civil society’ are rather rare). While the notion of the ‘global state’ has made some notable appearances (see Shaw, 2000), it seems to remain in a minority position in terms of usage compared to the ‘world state’. While this is not the place to address the difference between the ‘world’ and ‘global’ in any detail, we would like to propose a concluding thought that it may actually be worthwhile to accord it more analytical importance when thinking about the future of the world state in future studies.

Historically, the concept of ‘world’ is Germanic and finds its origins from ‘wer’ (‘who’) plus ‘alt’ (‘old’), i.e. the old German ‘weralt’ and ‘uueralt’, eventually related to a ‘creation of the world’. Whereas the ‘global’ has a closed finite form in space (‘the Earth’, the ‘globe’), the ‘world’ presents a legacy of open and evolving complexity (Braun, 1992; Stichweh, 2000; Luhmann, 1997: 145-171, 806-12; 2000: 18f, 59f). Thus, the concept of ‘world’ is rather temporal than spatial. First referring back to the history of mankind, since St. Augustine it also began to refer to a future under the impact of ideas like the eternal city of God; hence the ‘end of the world’ became a negative apocalyptic idea along with the reverse positive idea of a utopian future world. Under the influence of Mediterranean monotheistic semantics, the late Roman Empire began to legitimate itself with reference to a universal world and paved the way for later early modern notions of a ‘monarchia universalis’ that transcended its actual imperial and spatial reach (see Moraw, 1982). The implication was that territorial power (‘potestatis’) – situated in a spatial terrain, a state territory or spanning the entire Earth –, should achieve legitimacy or authority (‘auctoritas’) from a universal ‘world’. It is in this sense that ‘globality’ refers to the range of decision-making, while the ‘world’ refers to its possible acceptance in an open universe.

As noted, the present Special Issue is no exemption to the rule that the concepts of ‘world’ and ‘global’ are usually used interchangeably. Yet, there may be good reasons to re-establish the historical distinction, particularly when it comes to the possible future of a world state. As hinted at, the distinction between the ‘global’ and the ‘world’ within it carries a distinction between power on the one hand, and authority and legitimacy on the other hand. Thus, while the notion of a ‘global state’ would primarily hint at the range of decision-making (i.e. ‘global governance’), the notion of a ‘world state’ would imply interpretation frames legitimating such decisions (see also Walker, 2010). Such a distinction builds on a semantic distinction

established in French since Leibniz, i.e. the distinction between ‘globalization’ and a more universally oriented ‘mondialization’ (Leibniz, 1695). The ‘world’ takes form as a polity subject to rationalities, reason and enlightening. Hence, a world state is in a process from a past constitutionalization towards a future of becoming a state of authorization: its claims go beyond and transcend its global reach.

Not least following the discovery and exploration of the ‘New World’ the secular question then arose whether the world may actually contain conceptions and classifications different from the European ones? On the one hand, this can be seen as the historical starting point of a blurring distinction between notions of world and globe. On the other hand, it re-established the idea of ‘world’ as one of meaning and of a micro-cosmic ‘world of experience’, thus at the same time opening the realm for a subjective aesthetic, yet reasonable ‘world view’ (‘Weltanschauung’) (Kant, 1790: § 26), and for the idea of a republican common world, a cosmopolitan world with ‘world citizens’ (Kant, 1795). The more the atlas and the image that mapped the entire earth spread, the more the cosmopolitan world became distinguished from it. Hence the order and classifications found in the still more territorial spatial forms could be reordered and reclassified in discussions about ‘world history’, ‘world trade’ and ‘world markets’ etc. However, in contrast to the fact that very few would nowadays dispute the existence of, for example, a ‘world market’ or ‘world trade’, the existence of ‘world state’ would be disputed by many, perhaps most.

These observation regarding the background of the oscillating use of the ‘world’ and the ‘global’ also point to the rationale why the very concept of the ‘state’ cannot be fixed when talking about a world state. Unlike in the majority of normative discussions about the desirability of a world state, the main point of reference here is *not* the legal ideal of the sovereign territorial nation-state writ large. Rather, and reflecting on the fact that historically

there have been numerous paths of state formation and that different logics of statehood have always coexisted (and continue to coexist – witness the intensive and ongoing discussions on whether the European Union ‘is’ as state; cf. in particular also the contribution by Brunkhorst to this volume), the present Special Issue operates on the basis of the assumption that it is probably futile to look for but one logic of world state formation (see also again Shaw, 2000). And that indeed, if the focus on the modern sovereign state is relinquished, there is the possibility that we may actually live in an era in which some form of global statehood is in existence (and has been for a while) already. Yet that the emergence of a *world state* in the sense just described, i.e. as a legitimized form of making collectively binding decisions with a *global* range, is still a part of both some present futures as well as possibly of the future present. The question of collective violence complicates things even further and is closely connected to the questions of legitimacy and legitimation.

World state futures as geo-historical possibilities: outline of the Special Issue

When at least some ‘world statehood’ is argued to be in existence, and similarly when the emergence of a world state is seen as inevitable, the discussion is not concerned about abstract normative claims or cut off from concrete world history. Rather the focus is on real geo-historical possibilities and on the future that is either in some way already present or can be anticipated in a meaningful way – and, as is well known, anticipations are also an important part of the present world as well. This is the starting point of our special issue, ‘Present Futures and Future Presents – World State Scenarios for the 21st Century’. Our attempts at devising long-term scenarios or theoretically reflexive anticipations of possible and likely futures, a technique widely employed in many fields in the politics-making and business communities, is not to be misunderstood as an abstract exercise removed from practice. Quite to the contrary: As complex social systems are characterized by possibilities for various

outcomes and qualitative emergence rather than by pre-determined regularities or invariances, the envisioning of futures in the present can open the spaces of thinking about, and shaping, the processes that are bringing about future presents – as much as they must not be mistaken to be predictions about the future. Our special issue is an exercise in devising possible global futures with a focus on the question of an emerging world state or (elements of) statehood, and on assessing the viability and legitimacy of such present or emerging formations.

Hence, we are not only trying to devise scenarios about developments that are leading or may lead to world statehood in the course of the 21st century, either in response to key global problems, risks and uncertainties (ecology, economy, technology, war, violence), or because of the inherent logic of the human ethico-political evolution (logic of recognition, stages of moral learning etc). We are also asking: how will political communities and the legitimate control of violence evolve? What are the ways in which path-dependent processes might determine the type and structures of a global state formation? Does a world state really provide a solution to the identified problems and would it be viable? Might a world state too be only a temporary phase in the history of humanity?

The first essay, by *Christopher Chase-Dunn* and *Hiroko Inoue*, analyses the emergence of a world state in terms of historical *longue durée*. Their contribution is mainly about the evolution of global governance in the Europe-centred modern world-system since the 15th century, but the analysis of the trajectory of the modern system is done in the context of the study of human socio-cultural evolution on a millennial scale. The patterned sequence of the evolution of increasingly centralized and capacious global governance institutions is examined with an eye to the prospects for speeding up the processes of global state formation and the democratization of the institutions of global governance. The authors propose scenarios both about (i) a future in which major calamities will occur in the coming decades

regardless of the efforts of far-sighted world citizens and social movements, and (ii) a future in which an effective and democratic global government might emerge in the absence of any such huge disaster. What are the conditions of the latter possibility? According to Chase-Dunn and Inoue, 'one scenario would involve a coalescent party-network of the New Global Left that would emerge from the existing 'movement of movements' that have been participating in the World Social Forum.'

In his contribution, *Hauke Brunkhorst* provides a very different perspective from arguments for the establishment of a cosmopolitan order and some form of cosmopolitan statehood. He argues that a form of cosmopolitan order has been around for quite a long time and that particularly cosmopolitan and national statehood have co-evolved, rather than the possibility of the former depending on the demise of the latter (as if often assumed in debates on cosmopolitanism). Like Chase-Dunn and Inoue, Brunkhorst approaches the world state problematic from a deep historical perspective, arguing that whatever position we may assume, we are already *within* a cosmopolitan world order. In this context, he reads the nation state to be a 'borderline case of statehood'. The argument is developed that the co-evolution of national and cosmopolitan statehood can be traced through different stages since the Papal and the Protestant revolutions beginning in the twelfth and sixteenth centuries respectively. However, it is only in the twentieth century that within cosmopolitanism a new idea of freedom, contained in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is invented. Brunkhorst argues that the exclusion of formal inequalities, which was once the legal principle of the normative integration of the modern nation-state, has now become the principle of the normative integration of world law or the constitutive principle of global constitutionalism.

In the third essay of this special issue, *Bob Jessop* studies multi-scalar meta-governance and its implications for global governance and world state formation. Jessop addresses problems of global governance from a complexity-theoretical perspective that also draws on state theory, governance theory, and critical political economy. Like Chase-Dunn/Inoue and Brunkhorst, Jessop see many elements of world statehood already in existence. However, Jessop's principal conclusion is that, while a *world state* proper may be possible in formal, institutional terms, its actual operation will be shaped by the *world of states* as well as the uneven development of the capitalist world market. On theoretical grounds, he argues, it seems unlikely that a world state would become the dominant scale within any system of multi-scalar meta-governance, especially in a networked, asymmetrical, and still hierarchical world of states in which environmental and economic problems are major sources of political pressure and conflict. This conclusion points to a basic paradox in the idea of political activities oriented to the creation of a world state: an effective world state oriented to good governance is implausible on fundamental theoretical and political grounds but efforts to develop such a state made in the spirit of romantic public irony are justified and may prove beneficial.

In the fourth article, *Ronald Tinnevelt* explores the substance and structures of different possible world state formations. Instead of arguing for the necessity or inevitability of some form of world state and presenting the defining features of a world state, he merely discusses the barriers that political and legal theorists face when they want to go against the flow of global governance and argue for some form of minimal world state. He starts by distinguishing between a maximal and minimal world state. Tinnevelt asks whether a minimal world state can remain a complementary or secondary state in the long run. If not, Tinnevelt argues, the model of a minimal world state will move in the direction of a unified global state and will again be exposed to some of the traditional arguments against a world

state. From this point of view he analyses the conditions of and barriers to a minimal world state. For example, by recognizing the importance of the dual principles of federalism and subsidiarity, the model of a minimal world state could counteract the pluralism, infeasibility, and bounded citizenship objection. However, a more fundamental problem is whether the model of a minimal world state – especially a federation – is able to by-pass some of the pressures for hierarchical centralization that are characteristic of the national state. The ‘all affected’ principle poses far-reaching challenges. As the process of globalization is leading to an increase in transboundary issues, the category of ‘all affected’ inevitably implies a certain centralizing tendency. Tinnevelt concludes that even a minimal world state strikes a fragile balance between a simultaneous need for centralization and decentralization.

In the last contribution, *Heikki Patomäki* explores the conditions of legitimation of a world political community (WPC), possibly assuming the form of a world or even global state. His starting point is that every argument about the possibility, desirability and/or inevitability of a world state constitutes a standpoint for assessing its future legitimacy and sustainability. The reason for posing questions about legitimation in a future WPC is to shed light on the possible ethico-political grounds for further global integration. Among other things, the analysis of elements and dynamics of legitimation also facilitates the assessment of the feasibility of different paths towards planetary-scale integration. What are the deep but historically evolving normative and institutional underpinnings that can make a sustainable WPC possible? What could provide legitimacy to a WPC and thus make it viable; and what are the potential and likely pitfalls of such an abstract, large-scale political community? Patomäki argues that while the standard security-military and functionalist political economy arguments for planetary unification and political community are important and may work to a point, after that they tend to become irrelevant, counterproductive, or even self-defeating, especially in terms of legitimation. What ultimately matters are the moral standards and political

judgements that constitute multiple political actions and struggles in a future WPC. In other words, the argument is that although a viable WPC is possible, it is possible only contingently, depending on manifold, multi-layered and complex conditions of legitimation. Therefore, Patomäki focuses on theories of civilizing process and stages of ethico-political learning. Collective human learning not only explains the quest for democratization but also points towards cosmopolitan moral sentiments. However, there is an internal relationship between democracy and identity, and identities tend to be particular. Patomäki concludes by proposing a reconstructive way to think about world political identity.

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